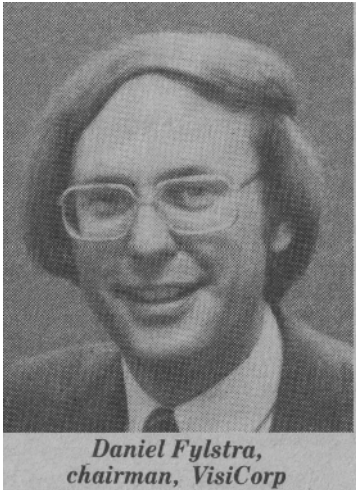


# VisiCorp hopes to regain position with new biz line

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NEW YORK — As expected, VisiCorp announced several new products today, seen as essential to its re-emergence as a force in the mainstream business market.

The introduction of a floppy disk-based Visi On Line, initially for the IBM PC, represents VisiCorp's intention to exploit its position as the first to market a high-function windowing environment, chairman Daniel Fylstra said. Due to be shipped in August, the new line is intended to topple the price barrier—the cost of a hard disk—consumers ran into with the original Visi On.

The move also signifies VisiCorp's stepped-up commitment to the market—once dominated by Apple—responsible for its success.

"I'm convinced that the introduction of the new products represents a major shift in VisiCorp's marketing strategy to gain a strong foothold in the market it helped found," said industry analyst Ken Churilla with Creative Strategies International, San Jose, Calif.

The new series still requires 512 RAM, but no longer a costly hard disk. The option to upgrade to the hard-disk version is encouraged, however, as both use the same floppy disk-based applications. Separate versions of the Applications Manager are required at this time. (One drawback to the new series is that only multiple windows of the same application can be viewed. A hard disk is required to be able to view windows from more than one application. The company rationalizes this limitation by saying that each application is strong enough to stand alone.)

As part of this understanding, individual applications are expected to compete with existing top sellers, Multiplan and Lotus 1-2-3, by offering users, who may want a completely integrated system in the long term, a single application to familiarize themselves with the system.

On the performance side, Fylstra is quick to admit that, as far as speed is concerned, "we're within striking distance of Lotus 1-2-3." What remains is the technical challenge of getting Visi On up to speed on the IBM PC. The Wang Professional Computer runs Visi On 50% faster than the PC, Fylstra said.

It's evident that VisiCorp must prove itself with this round of products. Paine Webber financial analyst Curt Monash thinks the ingredients for success are there.

"Visi On has a leg up on the other products out there. If it works, it will be a very competitive product," he said.

With the new product in place for the mainstream business market, VisiCorp has announced product for each market segment it targeted (C+SN, June 11). FlashCalc (and any additions to that line), plus the repriced VisiSeries are directed at the high end, casual business audience, while original Visi On will address the workstation arena.

Breaking new ground in an-other area, VisiCorp has agreed, with Mouse Systems, to distribute two software programs bundled with a mouse.

One is a paint program, reportedly similar to MacPaint that requires 192K RAM and a single 360K disk drive, and the other, a pop-up menu program that seeks to address the competition. Both run on the IBM PC.

With the latter, the mouse can be used with Multiplan, Lotus 1-2-3, WordStar, VisiCalc and VisiWord Plus. VisiCorp's strategy here is to promote use of the mouse, which is bundled at no extra cost, with both the paint program and pop-up menu application.

One analyst thought the announcement demonstrated that VisiCorp, waiting until now to announce mouse-related products, displayed "a lack of understanding of other market possibilities for the mouse."

Mouse products should debut in August for about \$250 each. Formal product pricing and availability announcements will be made at the National Computer Conference.

Eager to see more Visi On applications software on the scene, Fylstra also described a software development tool kit for the IBM XT.

The availability of the kit is seen as crucial to securing commitments from outside developers to support the line.

"If we had 12 complimentary applications for Visi On, I'd be satisfied," Fylstra said.

Also seen as a move to satisfy "market and image-related issues" are VisiCorp's plans to offer an MS-DOS window in Visi On, as part of Visi On version 2.0 due in September.

Able to run any MS-DOS program, constraints imposed on users, with this window, are limited viewing capability—only 80 by 25 display is seen—and the application must occupy the full screen before any commands can be issued to it.

Before anyone gets access to version 2.0, however, Visi-Corp will begin shipping a performance-enhanced Visi On version 1.2, next month. Features include recalculation speeds for large spreadsheets up to 10 times faster than the former version; 30%-60% improvement in data swapping time; instantaneous paging through large word processing documents, and a 30% improvement in spreadsheet scrolling performance.

Any improvements announced for Visi On pertain to both the hard and floppy disk-based versions.